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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study determined the extent to which the language experience approach (LEA) is used in the kindergarten and first grades of six northwest Bergen County, New Jersey, school districts. Anonymous surveys were mailed to all kindergarten and first-grade teachers in these districts. Forty-five (63%) of the surveys were returned. Results indicated that: (1) the basal reader is still the primary instructional tool of the respondents; (2) 60% of the respondents use class-dictated LEA methods always or often in their programs; (3) teachers with zero to five years of experience placed the least emphasis on the basal reader, the most emphasis on LEA, big books, trade books, and poems, and are apt to use writing-as-process more than any other group except those teachers with more than 21 years of service; (4) writing frequency is greater among the less experienced teachers, and daily writing is significantly greater among the LEA teachers than among non-LEA teachers; (5) for the most part, teachers within any given district used similar programs; and (6) teachers in the Pesce Northern Valley District survey moved more toward whole language across the board than this group. (Seven tables of data are included; 31 references, the survey cover letter, and the survey instrument are attached.) (RS)

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LEA

Language Experience Approach: Who Uses It?

Submitted by:

Carol Garofalo

William Paterson College

May 16, 1991

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ABSTRACT

LEA

Language Experience Approach: Who Uses It?

The purpose of this descriptive research was to determine the extent to which the language experience approach (LEA) is used in the kindergartens and first grades of six northwest Bergen County, New Jersey, school districts. Anonymous surveys were mailed to all kindergarten and first-grade teachers in these districts. Based on 45 (63%) responses, it was determined that LEA holds an integral position in the reading instruction programs of four of the six towns. Results show it most likely to be used to the greatest extent by those teachers with 0-5 years teaching experience. In fact, teachers with less than 6 years experience use notably different methods/materials than the more experienced teachers. Dividing the teachers by grade, kindergarten teachers were less likely to use LEA than first-grade teachers. Breaking down the entire sample population into either LEA users or non-LEA users (by virtue of using class-dictated LEA activities on an always/often basis), the contrast becomes more pronounced. LEA users were less likely to place as great a value on basals, more likely to use other whole language materials, and much more likely to support frequent writing. Recommendations are made to teachers and administrators, and suggestions are given for further research at the end of the study. Correlations of research with survey responses suggest that kindergarten teachers take a more serious look at LEA usage and that all teachers have their students write more frequently.

Carol Garofalo
William Paterson
May 16, 1991

ABSTRACT

LEA

Language Experience Approach: Who Uses It?

The purpose of this descriptive research was to determine the extent to which the language experience approach (LEA) is used in the kindergartens and first grades of six northwest Bergen County, New Jersey, school districts. Anonymous surveys were mailed to all K and Grade 1 teachers in these districts. Results show that LEA holds an integral position in reading instruction in four of the six towns, is used to the greatest extent by those teachers with 0 - 5 years teaching experience and is used more by first grade teachers than by kindergarten teachers. Dividing the sample population into LEA-users and non-LEA users, (by virtue of using class dictated LEA activities on an always/often basis), there is a pronounced contrast. LEA users place less value on basals, use other whole language materials more, and support more frequent writing activity. Recommendations are made to teachers, administrators, and future researchers. The results of the study suggest that kindergarten teachers consider the benefits of LEA for their students and that all teachers have their students write more frequently.

Carol Garofalo
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CHAPTER ONE

The Problem

> What I can think about, I can talk about. What I can talk about, I can write. What I can write, I can read. I can read what I write and what other people can write for me to read (R.V. Allen, 1976, p. 51).

Allen's quotation succinctly states the underlying philosophy of the language experience approach. While teachers have known since time began that the greatest motivation for learning comes when one taps the child's own interests and own language, formal approaches have remained skills-based and lacking in any direct relationship with the child. The language experience approach provided a meaning-centered, whole-language method of reading instruction prior to the advent of the "whole language" movement proper. Those children being instructed by language experience approach (LEA) methods have been bringing meaning to the material they read; they have, in fact, been constructing meaningful language for reading all along.

Today there are movements on many fronts toward the use of "whole language" in classrooms. Whole language is not a defined method. Antithetically, it is the instructional approach created by a classroom environment in which reading is taught as part of an holistic, integrated approach to the language arts. It opposes the basal-dominated reading program with its focus on teaching subskills in isolation. While many teachers welcome the change, others feel the hairs on their necks rising. They feel threatened. It would be interesting to find out the degree to which teachers have incorporated LEA strategies successfully into their programs through the years, never considering them "whole language" methods. If something familiar falls under the whole language umbrella by accident then "whole language" might seem less of an alien entity, less a separate and whole doctrine in itself.

I see this dichotomous reaction to the term "whole language" firsthand in my own district. Nevertheless oneof the pillars of the first-grade reading program in the district is the LEA, a "whole language" method, with daily experience stories being dictated by the entire class and individually distributed to each child for rereading at home. This experience approach comes to be

integrated with, and by second grade, superceded by the basal. It remains, however, the real kickoff to reading instruction and is high valued. Because teachers don't look upon LEA as whole language, LEA is nonthreatening.

Statement of the Problem

The major question addressed by this study is: To what extent is LEA used by those kindergarten and first grade teachers surveyed who teach in the Northwest Bergen County towns of Franklin Lakes, Hohokus, Midland Park, Paramus, Waldwick and Wyckoff.

Additional questions that may be answered by the information collected are the following:

1. Is there a correlation between years of teaching experience and the use of LEA and/or other whole language methods?

2. Is there a correlation between the use of LEA methods and the use of other so-called whole language methods (e.g. big books, trade books, rhymes and chants)?

3. Is there a connection between use of LEA methods and use of writing-as-process?

4. Do LEA users value basals less than non-LEA

users?

5. Are teachers in a given district in agreement on their responses?

6. Is the overall trend similar to that of the Pesce (1990) survey of trends in the nearby and socioeconomically similar Northern Valley District of Bergen County?

Definitions

In this paper the following terms will be defined as follows:

1. Basal reader - a book of stories, articles, poems, and plays written specifically to teach reading (usually accompanied by a workbook) and in which vocabulary increases sequentially in difficulty with each succeeding book. Vocabulary is controlled by initially using high frequency words (the), regularly spelled words (bat, cat) and high interest words (boy, play, dog) and progressing to lower frequency words, words with irregular spelling patterns and words which are more abstract. Skills are presented in tightly sequenced format.

2. Big books - large storybooks, usually predictable, with large print for use in reading to groups of children - shared reading.

3. Language experience approach (LEA) - an integrated language arts approach to beginning reading which utilizes the child's own language as initial reading material and the child's experiences as source material for content development. The child/children dictate the story, the teacher writes it down, usually on chart paper, and the children read back what they have written. Decoding, word-attack and other language instruction is integrated into the writing and reading of the story by the teacher.

4. Linguistic approach - a reading approach in which word recognition is taught through common spelling patterns in English orthography.

5. Phonics - code-emphasis approach to reading instruction which emphasizes a sound-symbol relationship - letters and sounds taught in isolation.

6. Trade books - books, fiction and nonfiction, not specifically intended for reading instruction (e.g.

library books and those books sold in book stores.)

7. Whole language - meaning-emphasis approach to language that teaches reading as an holistic activity. Children read whole authentic texts, respond orally and through writing. Skills are taught in context. Children write every day in workshop fashion which follows the writing-process. It opposes the basal-dominated reading program with its focus on teaching subskills in isolation.

8. Writing process - approach to writing which focuses on a multi-step process rather than the final product. The steps include prewriting, drafting, revising, editing with peers and, finally, sharing with an audience. Mechanics are not addressed until revision and editing time.

Limitations

There are some obvious limitations to this descriptive study. The number surveyed is small; therefore, any conclusions reached are heavily dependent upon an almost total return. Also those who take the time to respond are usually atypical and "special"; they may

not reflect "average" teachers.

Limitations from within the survey instrument itself might include misunderstandings of the survey terms referring to materials and methods and the tendency to respond with the perceived "best" response. Personal topic bias is also a likely issue. There are strong feelings for and against basal usage, as well as for and against whole language. If a traditional basal-driven teacher perceives the options to be slanted away from basal usage, he/she might become self-protective and a "defender of the faith." On the other hand, one might be ashamed of his/her reliance on the basal workbook, for example, and answer with "wishful thinking." The truthfulness of the respondents is a real limitation.

Significance

The major significance of this study is the determination of the extent to which LEA, a whole-language technique, is used, especially in conjunction with programs that consider themselves primarily basal. It is important to collect periodic records of the methods and materials used in given areas in order to identify

patterns that exist and trends that develop. If sufficient returns come in and a fair amount of integrity has been exercised in the responses, it will be interesting to compare the approaches of a variety of teachers and districts who would be expected to have a great deal in common. There is also the need to confirm or deny the correlations that may be taken for granted (e.g. teachers within a given district using similar methods and materials) and to explore unexpected relationships that may reveal themselves. Also, should there be minimal responses to the usage of trade books or any of the particular research-backed improvements and advances in instructional methods/materials, the need for further probing will be highlighted. Are administrations oblivious to current research? Are teachers? Is staff development sufficient?

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

> ...What a dangerous activity reading is: teaching is. All this plastering on of foreign stuff. Why plaster on at all when there's so much inside already? So much locked in? If only I could get it out and use it as working material. And not draw it out either. If I had a light enough touch it would just come out under its own volcanic power (Sylvia Ashton-Warner in Spinster, 1959, as quoted by Veatch et al., 1973, p. iii).

The language experience approach (LEA) to reading and writing uses the child's own speech and provides experiences that are closely related to the child's personal and social needs. Through the use of their oral language children learn to read and write. The language experience approach cannot be mechanized; it is natural, noncommercial, and both child- and meaning-centered.

Standard language experience approach recommendations include introducing a story topic that relates to something previously experienced by the students (Heller, 1988). The skeletal framework of Lee and Van Allen's

language experience approach is simplified by Veatch (1963) in the following:

1. The teacher gets the children to talk spontaneously, probably in a group or whole class situation.

2. Some or all of the talk is written down by the teacher.

3. Activities of myriad sorts in talking, reading, and writing are developed.

Beginnings

The practice of using children's language for reading is certainly not new. The development of the practice into a somewhat organized methodology is relatively new. A procedural part of classroom curricula as early as 1900, the "natural" method of reading was introduced by Miss Flora Cooke at the Chicago Institute (Seufert, 1988). The term "experience method" itself did not arise until 1934 when Nila B. Smith used it to title her language program;: "language experience" came later yet (Hall, 1978).

Giants in the field include Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Russell Stauffer, Roach Van Allen and Mary Ann Hall. In a

1981 interview, Roach Van Allen responded to the question of his proudest accomplishment as follows:

> Of all the things that I have done, the one that stands out as being the most significant and one of which I am proud is the development of a theoretical model for a language experience program. This model has made possible the wide dissemination of my work and has formed the constraints for writing that keeps it from being a collection of 'cute ideas.'
>
> Another accomplishment was the work with Dr. Russell Stauffer in the organization of the Language Experience Special Interest Group within the International Reading Association. This was the first special interest group formed and it still functions after about twenty years (Searfoss & Jerrolds, 1989, p. 87).

Current Status of LEA

By any name, the LEA has had its hills and valleys of popularity. Years ago, as now, the term "language experience approach" varied in its actual format from user to user. It has always been an integrated language arts approach and a functional approach to reading instruction. There was always the bringing of meaning to print in order to construct the message. It is most definitely a "meaning emphasis" approach (Chall, 1967).

May (1986), while acknowledging the continuing

popularity of basal-reader approaches to reading instruction, noted that there are increasing numbers of elementary teachers now supplementing their programs, and, in some cases, actually substituting with some sort of language experience approach. Language experience approaches fill the bill particularly well in certain situations:

1. kindergarteners learn that print represents speech, develop left-right orientation, reinforce letter/sound connections, and so forth

2. first graders who still dictate their thoughts, but now write them as well, recognize sight words, common suffixes and graphophonic patterns

3. children who do not speak Standard English comprehend communication in reading because their own experiences provide meaningful material for them

Language development is functional and wholly meaning- and experience-centered for the preschool child. One would expect the continuing acquisition of language skills to be equally meaningful and equally successful. However, the philosophy of basal publishers devalues the child's own language, in spite of its greater sophistication, and contends that material prepared to

elicit successful early reading must contain primarily both high-frequency and phonetically regular words. Sampson, Briggs and White (1982) hypothesized that students would handle student-authored language of greater semantic and syntactic sophistication with more success and more comprehension than they would the language of basal readers. Their nine first-grade subjects, from a rural public school in Texas, dictated a story on a first visit and read from both a second preprimer basal and their own dictated stories during two subsequent visits. Using the Goodman and Burke miscue analysis procedure (1972) for assessment of oral reading and story retellings for assessment of comprehension, the researchers found that the students used more efficient strategies with the dictated material in the pursuit of meaning and experienced greater success in both the affective and cognitive domains. The study suggested that high interest instructional materials motivate the child to a higher level of achievement (Sampson, 1982).

Stahl and Miller (1989), in their quantitative research synthesis on whole language/language experience approaches , used two data bases: the USOE first grade studies and 46 additional studies comparing basal reading

approaches to whole language or language experience approaches. They suggest that while whole language/language experience approaches might be most effective for teaching the functional aspects of reading, such as print concepts and expectations about reading, more direct approaches might be better at helping students master word recognition skills requisite to effective comprehension.

Hall (1978) summarized the results of 42 studies regarding the effects of LEA instruction, concluding that there is evidence "to support that the overall reading achievement of students who receive language experience instruction is satisfactory, and, in some cases, it is superior to the achievement of children instructed by other approaches" (p. 24). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) suggested that the effects of language experience approaches have been indifferent compared with conventional basal reading. Grundin (1985) took issue with this and reanalyzed the Bond and Dykstra data of the 60's used by Anderson. His reanalysis of the data indicated that whole language/language experience approaches were the best performing of the five tested (language experience/structure approaches, linguistic

approaches, basal plus additional phonics, i.t.a. approaches, and basal only). Stahl and Miller (1989) then questioned Grundin's analysis and performed their own quantitative synthesis. For the purposes of their review, Stahl and Miller defined a whole language/language experience method as having the following traits: emphasis on using the children's own language either through experience charts or their own writing using invented spelling; lessons that are child-centered, based on the assumption that competence will develop out of need to use language to communicate better (contrasted to basal skills sequencing the instruction); emphasis on trade books rather than basals; and decoding instructed on a needs-basis and in the context of reading whole text (not in isolation). Stahl and Miller's analyses suggested that:

> ...the overall effects of whole language/language experience and basal reading programs are similar, but that the effects are not homogeneous. Because of the heterogeneity of the findings, the overall lack of differences between whole language/language experience and basal reading programs may obscure strong differences in certain subsets of the data (p. 94).

Stahl and Miller suggest the results point to whole language/language experience approaches being more effective in kindergarten and all the approaches being

more equal in first grade.

In the case of some of the language experience approaches studied, the negative results may be due in part to the amount of actual reading time. In 1966 Harris and Serwer (as reported in Stahl and Miller, 1989) found that children in their project's basal reading program spent more time on direct reading while language experience pupils spent more time on indirect reading related activites such as talking about what they were going to write or had read. While the whole language proponents would never intend for there to be less reading, the general philosophy of LEA that reading and speaking are equivalent aspects of the language process suggests that time spent on either would be equally profitable. Stahl and Miller state that this does not appear to be the case in improving reading. They cite the 1985 work of Evans and Carr that suggests children need "print-specific" skills for success in reading. Approaches that always emphasize the construction of meaning may not achieve their purpose in the end. Stahl and Miller conclude that the research points to a trichotomy of three approaches as being most effective: phonics, skills, and whole language. Self-acknowledged

specified limitations of the Stahl and Miller review include the fact that they did not examine the effects of whole language/language experience on writing, they did not go beyond grade one in the data review, and they excluded eclectic programs in which whole language/language experience were partial components. They suggest that future research attempt to isolate effective components of beginning reading programs, and they again cite Evans and Carr who found that the amount of silent reading in both settings correlated significantly with achievement. However, it is not known whether silent reading in trade books with authentic language have different effects than silent reading in basals.

Schickedanz (1990) challenges the methods and conclusions of Stahl and Miller. Her major concern is that studies like that of Stahl and Miller, with a narrow focus on reading and limited short-term data, might prematurely cut short the life of whole language/language experience programs before their actual worth can be determined. In the older language experience approaches, young children wrote less while teachers took dictation for personal and group writing. Schickedanz suspects that whole language devotees may have underestimated the extent to which adult interactions are implicated in young children's emergent literacy development. Says Schickedanz,

> If initial differences in reading essentially even out by third or fourth grade, and if whole language/language experience approaches significantly improve writing skills, there's absolutely no point in worrying about a slight basal reader advantage on reading comprehension in first and second grades (p. 129).

Millerich (1991) credits LEA with making one of the first legitimate attempts to integrate the language arts by using the children's own language for reading instruction. He sees the major failing of LEA to be that the oral language of kindergarteners and first graders is usually too sophisticated in syntax and vocabulary to be

used verbatim as beginning reading material.

Comparative Studies

LEA has not necessarily shown itself to be superior to other approaches in many experimental studies. Often it is found to be "equal to" another method or best if used "in conjunction with" more direct and systematic code-emphasis instruction. Some researchers have implied an advantage to LEA based on subjective data they have culled from observations outside the realm of the statistical findings of their studies (Seufert, 1988).

In a two-year control study comparing basal readers, Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) and language experience, Hahn (1967) found that those students instructed with language experience and i.t.a. scored higher in overall achievement on the Stanford Achievement Test, Primary Battery II, 1966, than those students instructed with basal materials. Achievement gained and measured at the end of grade one continued to show at the end of grade two. The investigator further noted that the basal children did not have time to write and, therefore, did not develop the joy of self expression that was

evident in the language experience children.

Stauffer ran several comparative studies of different approaches to reading instruction. In one control study (1966) he found both the basal reader and the language experience approach to be effective first-grade instructional strategies, with language experience showing a slight edge. In 1968, using first through third graders as subjects, he and Hammond found a definite language arts advantage in first and second grades with its spread diminishing by third grade. The experimental groups' higher test scores in language skills were attributed to the focus on all communication skills.

Gardiner (1978) found in one comparative experimental study that the twenty first-grade children instructed by a language-based method read more strategically than did the twenty children in the basal control group. She also concluded that they achieved a higher level of word recognition and experienced greater success with their reading strategies because they saw more relevancy in reading.

In a 1980 control study, Ramig and Hall noted on one

assessment procedure, the Harris-Jacobson Core List, that first-grade children instructed with language experience more often made miscues that substituted real words for list words than did the children taught with basal readers. They determined from this that, with no semantic or syntactic clues available, language experience children still had a better understanding that graphic symbols represent meaning (Seufert, 1988).

Thomas (1980), in a first grade study of reader-authored materials, found that children read orally better and with fewer miscues their own dictated stories than basal text stories. She further noted that those who wrote their own stories created a more complex plot and formed a better story than the basal text (Seufert).

Vocabulary and Comprehension

Vocabulary development is likely to be more substantial in those children using language experience because the words are more personally meaningful. In a 1976 study, Asplund and Sunal (1976) found supplemental language experience instruction increased the vocabulary of a small experimental group of second graders by 10% for

a combined mean gain of 20.8 words. The authors concluded that language experience reinforced the basal words by increasing the meaning. Kelly (1977), exploring the acquisition of sight vocabulary, found that 32 third-grade language experience children did as well or better on the Botel Word Recognition Test than the control group taught with basal readers. The experimental group registered a basic sight vocabulary 23% greater than the basal group (Seufert, 1988).

Veatch reported a 1970 study by Packer comparing the vocabulary that children asked to learn in the Ashton-Warner key-word approach (the eliciting from children of single-concept words they choose to know called by Sylvia Ashton-Warner "captions of the mind pictures") with words presented in basal readers. He found that the words asked for bore little or no relationship to the words in the basal reader; the child's own vocabulary was more meaningful and useful for both reading and writing (1973).

Due to the revived popularity of LEA as part of the whole language approach, Shapiro and Gunderson (1988) addressed the issue of the lack of vocabulary control in

language experience instruction. The investigators noted that, excluding proper nouns, 92% of the basal readers' vocabulary appeared in the language experience children's writing. They concluded that first-grade children exposed to whole language generated a more interesting vocabulary, thus stimulating more interest in reading (Seufert, 1988).

Seufert (1988) reported a 1978 study in which Buckner found significantly higher reading vocabulary and comprehension skills recorded at the end of first grade for those who had received language experience instruction in Kindergarten. The researcher concluded that a language experience program should be implemented in all Kindergarten classrooms.

Vocabulary, projected by some educators and parents to be stifled by LEA has, to the contrary, shown perfectly acceptable development, at least equal to that of other early reading programs. Also countering the critics, May (1986) has cited studies by Bond and Dykstra (1967 and 1968) showing that LEA students develop graphophonic decoding skills equal to those of basal students. In addition, Chomsky's 1971 research also cites superior spelling as another comparative benefit of LEA over basal

approaches (May, 1986).

Classroom Applications Rooted in Research

Allen, Wright and Laminack (1988) have written up a procedure called ALERT which combines LEA methods with radio, television, newspaper and magazine advertisements in a strategy designed to develop higher level critical thinking skills in younger children. The authors affirm the effectiveness and credibility of LEA, especially in developing interrelationships among communications skills. ALERT is a novel program in that it combines the use of LEA with familiar commercial messages from the student's own environment. The materials are available, plentiful, free or inexpensive and familiar to the children. Intended to help students learn to listen and read critically and to evaluate, the ultimate aim is the transfer of these skills to other situations around them.

As Heller (1988) states, it has been suggested by several researchers that story grammar instruction be incorporated into LEA lessons. She cites research suggesting this because LEA narrative stories have easily identifiable story elements. Stories in progress can be

vehicles for inductive teaching of story parts. It is appropriate to use on-the-spot analysis and instruction. The teacher can guide the students in looking for setting, plot, characterization, conflict, and resolution. A second benefit to the use of LEA with the emphasis on story grammar is the opportunity to use the modified experience lessons to provide effective instruction in composition as well as in reading comprehension.

Consider, too, LEA as a vehicle for storytelling. As Olga Nelson (1989), professional storyteller, reminds us, storytelling is itself a kind of "co-creation," a powerful language experience. Language experience is intended to extend and refine children's oral language skills and to use them as a foundation for the development of complementary power in reading and writing. Storytelling serves that purpose; it becomes a communication between literature and children. A story becomes what the listeners make it, depending on what experiences they bring to it. A simple story can pull and converge individual experiences into such a rich discussion that it increases both literal and critical comprehension. Thus, storytelling can, in itself, be a catalyst. "Stories beget stories" (p. 389).

Writing

Karnoski (1989) reports that, while many teachers use the LEA for collaborative writing and process writing for individual composition, it is important to note that LEA and process writing are not mutually exclusive approaches. "Both methods approach reading and writing as active processes. Students are actively involved in creating their own text based on their own experiences or imaginations. Both methods teach reading and writing as whole processes that are meaningful and relevant to the child. Both stress communication and meaning"(p. 462). They can be effectively combined in a modified LEA which allows students more of the decisions as in process writing.

We know that children bring their natural language drive to school with them and that they mimic what adults model. Adults read and write. Children read and write. Coates and Castle (1989) note that the teaching of reading through writing is essential as literacy emerges and that kindergarten teachers especially should be facilitating the process. They believe integrating LEA and invented spelling to be a workable solution. Initially the

children will dictate, LEA style, and the teacher write, using standard spelling. As the children progress and develop skills enough to decode their own words they will take over from the teacher with their invented spelling. Coates and Castle laud the results of the integration of the two approaches, citing such benefits as increased letter-sound knowledge, some reading, and increased comprehension of the concepts of "wordness" and left to right. No basal alone could accomplish this in kindergarten.

First grade teacher, Lester Laminack, takes one on a journey with him and his Heflin, Alabama class through their first LEA year. "Mr. L's" journal reflects his amazement at the rapid progress of the majority of the class in reading and, by November, the children's ability to extend the stories creatively in their own writing with remarkable attention to spelling and mechanics. The scores on the CAT's given in April were gratifying. The average grade equivalent for the LEA children was 2.1, the school average 1.9, and the county average 1.8 Allen & Laminack, 1982).

Diagnostic Tool

Dixon (1977) notes that language experience stories have long been used by perceptive teachers as informal diagnostic tools. The experience stories are relatively simple to obtain in a minimum amount of time and reflect each child uniquely. Categories of information that might be obtained are: Observable Behaviors, Global Language Usage, and Refined Language Usage. Used intuitively by many teachers, these categories need to be made more explicit in order to further objectify them as evaluative tools. Dixon broke the categories into the following specifics (p. 502):

Observable Behaviors

1. Does the child watch when words are written down?

2. Does the child pace his/her dictation to the writing speed of the transcriber?

3. Does the child pause at the end of a sentence or phrase?

4. Is the child able to give the story an appropriate title?

5. Does the child attempt to 'read back' the story after dictation is completed?

Global Language Usage

1. Does the child use complete sentences?

2. How many total words are used in the dictation?

3. How many different words are used in the dictation?

Refined Language Usage

1. Number of adjectives used.

2. Number of adverbs used.

3. Number of prepositional phrases included.

4. Number of embedded sentences found.

Based on this, a checklist was developed to be used under predetermined conditions with a predetermined stimulus and prediscussion. The checklist scores from pre-school and grade-one pilot studies correlated positively with Reading Maturity Scores from the Metropolitan Readiness Test supporting the value of continued development of the checklist as a diagnostic tool. The checklist results may also provide instructional implications as well.

Implications for Future Usage

One of the major findings of the National First Grade

Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967) is that any approach which is enriched with features of other approaches produces better reading achievement than the use of one approach exclusively. Recalling that May (1986) noted the increasing use of LEA as a supplemental part of the overall reading/writing instructional program, one should also take note of the advantages Hall (1981) claims for language experience when used in conjunction with other approaches. She says, "The high degree of personal involvement and the functional application of reading, speaking, listening, and writing are features that strongly support the use of language experience beyond the initial reading stage..."(p. 18).

Hall (1978) cites numerous sources whose work affirmed that LEA continues to be an effective approach at the second grade level and that language experience students develop into more competent communicators than those taught basally. Included in her citations is work done by Vilscek, Cleland and Bilka who further note that these students demonstrated superiority in comprehension of concepts and in reading in the content areas of science, social studies and arithmetic. They attribute this superiority to the diversity of reading.

Hoover, in her 1971 investigation of LEA under the guidance of R. V. Allen, surveyed 100 teacher training institutions to determine the extent to which teachers and teachers-in-training are exposed to a language experience approach. Prior to 1960, available material for teacher education was limited. Between 1960 and 1970 the language experience approach offerings at institutions of teacher training were steadily increasing. This study supported the following recommendations (p. 2530A):

> 1. A language-experience approach should be made available through more college and university offerings designed as a course, workshop or seminar or as part-course offerings in the areas of reading, language arts methods, early childhood and remedial reading, so that teachers may use the approach in beginning reading instruction and beyond the initial stage in classes for remedial reading, special education, bilingual, culturally disadvantaged children and illiterate adults.
>
> 2. More emphasis should be placed on oral language development of children before and during reading instruction.
>
> 3. More attention should be devoted to the relationship between the child's self-concept and school achievement as affected by grouping practices and classroom arrangement.
>
> 4. There is a need for new professional books and media for a language-experience approach.

Roadblocks can pop up in any field. Bruneau and Ambrose (1989) explored the perceptions of whole language instruction held by a group of kindergarten through second-grade teachers in the Midwest. As might be expected, the respondents clearly did not understand the concept of whole language. While most teachers accept whole language instruction as being an acceptable supplement to a basal program, they perceive it to be a "fun" activity but not a legitimate means for developing literacy. It seems essential to address teachers' beliefs about how children become literate or whole language may be perceived as simply the reading establishment's version of "new math."

Conclusions

In reality, language experience programs are of infinite value in the earliest stages of beginning reading. Since language and experience are two cornerstones of emerging literacy, LEA provides a stable foundation for learning to read by relating reading to the child's current level of language development. The a

approach provides a natural transition from prereading to reading with its functional introduction to the concept of meaningful print.

> The highest form of commendation a teacher can receive is to be called an 'eclectic teacher.' She is one who takes advantage of good practices whenever she can and regardless of their source. The best label that can be applied to the Language-Experience Approach is 'The Eclectic Approach to Reading Instruction.' It embraces the best practices regardless of their source and does so in a functional communication-oriented way (Stauffer, 1980, p. xiii).

CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Procedures

The literature review reflects the swing of the pendulum as the experts seek to identify and affirm a "best" method of reading instruction. One sees the contrast of whole-language vs. skills-based and child-centered vs. curriculum-centered programs in all their varying proportions. Overall, the language experience approach (LEA) is viewed both as a separate language arts-based method and as an integrated part of various instructional programs. How much it is actually used in primary classrooms is not clear.

By means of an umbrella survey of methods and materials used to teach reading in Kindergarten and first grade classrooms in six northwest Bergen County districts, this study attempts to determine the extent to which LEA is used, to what purpose, and by whom. Are the research findings of record reflected in current practice?

Subjects

The geographical focus of this study is northwest Bergen County, New Jersey. The socioeconomic status of the area is middle to upper middle class. These towns are part of what we call New York City's "bedroom communities," commuter havens for white-collar workers. Educationally, the Paramus and Waldwick district school systems are complete unto themselves from K-12; Franklin Lakes and Wyckoff feed into the same regional system after grade eight, and Hohokus and Midland Park feed into a single sending/receiving district after grade eight.

The sample included all kindergarten and first grade teachers in the six towns. Of the 71 teachers surveyed in all, 45 responded, reflecting an overall response rate of 63% and intradistrict response rates of anywhere from 50% to 88%. The responses indicated years of teaching experience ranging from less than one to more than 21, with a majority teaching less than 5 (See Table 1). Educational background is equally diverse with teachers' academic credentials ranging from the majority BA-only to MA+, as seen in Table 2. Less diverse is the time since the respondents had their most recent course/workshop in

Table 1

Years of Teaching Experience

Number of Years Teaching	Number of Teachers
0 - 5	18
6 - 10	7
11 - 15	7
16 - 20	7
21+	6

Table 2

Educational Levels

Educational Level	Number of Teachers
BA	15
BA + 15	6
BA + 30	3
MA	5
MA+	7

reading; although the most dated went back to 1972, more than 84% fell within the last five years.

Instruments

The instrument used to collect data for this study was a survey. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions on demographics, check-list scales for rating usage of the various teaching methods and materials commonly used in primary classrooms, and open-ended expansions of certain answers as well as self-identification of one's own reading orientation. The check-list responses were on a graded scale from one (never) to five (always). (See appendix A)

The survey has content validity since it was reviewed by teachers completing the Masters in Reading program at William Paterson College; additions and deletions were considered and/or made based on the suggestions of these teachers. In addition, the survey was originally patterned after the Pesce (1990) survey of current trends in first grade reading instruction. Although the present study focuses in on LEA, it was determined by the researcher to incorporate the substantive questions into

as much of the Pesce instrument as possible in the hopes of opening the door to additional and unexpected parallels/contrasts during the summarizing of the data. The other purpose for the broad scope of the survey was to encourage teacher honesty by surrounding the questions of specific interest (those on LEA) by those of general interest, thereby disguising the exact focus.

Procedures

The surveys were mailed directly to the teachers except in the case of Hohokus where it was requested that they be mailed to and distributed by the administration. All surveys included cover letters; stamped, self-addressed envelopes; and offers to provide the respondents with a summary of the final data. Returns were to be anonymous with only the town identified on the survey instrument. Discreet coding on the return envelopes allowed the researcher to identify the specific school of origination within a given district in order to permit observation of intradistrict school similarities and contrasts. (See Table 3)

The data obtained from the survey will be summarized

Table 3

Intradistrict LEA Usage Consistency

(Determined by Class-Dictated Usage)

District/School	Never	Occasionally	Always	LEA Use
Franklin Lakes 1			100%	7/9
2	33%	33%	33%	
3			100%	
Midland Park			100%	3/3
Hohokus	100%			0/2
Waldwick 1		100%		0/5
2	100%			
Paramus 1			100%	9/13
2			100%	
3		25%	75%	
4		60%	40%	
Wyckoff 1			100%	8/13
2			100%	
3	25%		75%	
4	75%		25%	

in the tables to follow. Descriptive observations will accompany the tabulated data.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The survey format was used to collect data with which to determine to what extent the language experience approach (LEA) is used by kindergarten and first grade teachers in the northwest Bergen County, New Jersey towns of Franklin Lakes, Hohokus, Midland Park, Paramus, Waldwick and Wyckoff. Forty-five kindergarten and first-grade teachers (18 kindergarten and 27 grade 1) responded. The information received was organized and tabulated to show the extent of LEA usage, the variables, including teaching experience, that may affect the choice of LEA and other materials/methods, as well as a profile of LEA users that highlights their use/nonuse of other whole language methods/materials.

Frequency of Use of Materials

Table 4 shows the frequency of use of the methods/materials for reading instruction by all 45 teacher respondents to the survey. Of these teachers, 60% indicated that they used LEA methods always or often,

while only 13% indicated seldom or never. That the majority of teachers utilize LEA supports the consensus research opinions (e.g. Stauffer, 1966; Hall, 1978; Grundin, 1985; to Shapiro & Gunderson, 1988) that it is an effective instrument in early reading instruction. On the other hand, since the research, especially that of Coates and Castle and of Buckner, emphasizes its use as <u>early</u> as possible to affirm the interconnection between all the language arts and to introduce print-specific-skills orientation as well, when the respondents are separated into kindergarten teachers and first grade teachers the results do <u>not</u> reflect recommendations based on the research. From the total response, only 18% of the kindergarten teachers use LEA often/always while 70% of the first-grade teachers do.

Table 5 shows the frequency of the methods/materials used for reading instruction by those teachers separated from the total group, by the statistics in Table 4, as ones who use LEA often/always. Tables 4 and 5 will be discussed together so that comparisons can be made between the behaviors of the total group and the LEA group when these behaviors differ significantly.

Table 4

Use of Materials/Methods by All Respondents

N - 45 (K - 18(40%) and Grade 1 - 27(60%)

Material/Method	Never/Seldom	Occas.	Always/Often	NR
Basal&Workbook	16%	2%	80%	2%
LEA (As class)	13%	27%	60%	
Big Books	16%	29%	56%	
Trade Books	22%	16%	56%	7%
Phonics	16%	20%	58%	7%
Linguistics	36%	16%	36%	13%
Poems/Chants/Songs	11%	18%	71%	
Writing-as-Process	22%	16%	60%	2%

Table 5

Use of Materials/Methods by LEA Always/Often Users

N - 27 (K - 8(30%) and Grade 1 - 19(70%)

Material/Method	Never/Seldom	Occas.	Always/Often	NR
Basal/Workbook	19%	1%	78%	
Big Books	11	26%	63%	
Trade Books	37%	19%	33%	11%
Phonics	15%	19%	59%	7%
Linguistics	26%	19%	48%	7%
Poems/Chants/Songs	4%	11%	85%	
Writing-as-Process	7%	26%	67%	

According to Table 4, 80% of the total respondents use basal and workbook both often/always, while only 16% indicate seldom/never. It is interesting to note that, of all approaches surveyed, basal plus workbook had the lowest percentage of middle-ground (occasional) responses. This is a category that is clearly understood by all respondents and invokes its yes or no with authority.

Big books are used always/often by 56% of the total respondents and seldom/never by 16%. Big books, with their attendant shared reading, represent simply a modern improvement of an old, time-tested method of reading instruction. One can do today effectively with a larger group or an entire class what one could once do only with an individual or a small group - read a book together. The availability of quality stories in big book format is increasing almost exponentially as publishers smell a winner. However, in this case, their gain is the teachers/students gain also.

All teachers responded that 56% use trade books always/often and 22% seldom/never. Completely contrary to researcher expectation was the sizable decrease from the overall 56% down to 33% of always/often trade book usage

by the LEA group. By the nature of all the responses, which frequently included circular explanations of what the respondents actually meant by their own scaled responses, it was apparent that the term "trade book" was not sufficiently clear. Possibly "library book" would have connoted a closer proximation of what is meant in a term more comprehensible for most teachers.

Phonics received a 58% always/often response on the survey with only 16% responding seldom/never. LEA users responded almost identically to the general sample. A fair number of respondents, however, who did not select always/often on the checklist still identified their programs (Carden, for example) and did respond positively to the incorporation of phonics instruction in their LEA activities. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the vast majority of teachers surveyed use phonics instruction one way or another, and the percentage response is not an accurate representation of actual practice.

Poems/chants/songs/rhymes rang up a whopping 71% always/often, second only in unity to basal usage. LEA users generated an 85% always/often tally for the category, second only to their usage of basals also. The

poems category represents primary education material from the stone age to the present. However, the very purposeful approach to such material and the deliberate selection and integration into reading instruction of predictable and/or repetitive language patterns characterize it today as a whole language practice. Some of the respondents may understand the integral relationship of the category to the language arts while others may consider this material part of "down time" for the students. Some may make good choices wholly by accident.

In response to the questions on writing-as-process and frequency of writing, the variations are significant. The overall response to the use of process writing always/often was 60 % and writing daily only 13%; 67% of the LEA teachers use process writing always/often, yet still only 28% of this group writes daily. These figures do not connect. Process writing has evolved along with the whole language movement. Daily writing makes for better language users in all ways. Teachers who understand the value of process writing usually have classes who write something in some way every day. To do otherwise is contradictory. These results will be

analyzed further when Table 7 is discussed.

Materials/Methods and Years of Teaching

Those teachers with 0-5 years teaching experience are the only ones surveyed who reflect significant movement away from the basal (see Table 6.) Of these teachers 59% always/often use the basal and 29% seldom/never. In contrast, 100% of those teachers with more than 10 years experience respond that they always/often use the basal. In general, it would seem that less experience correlates with less restrictive methodology, while more years of experience correlate with greater basal reliance. To confound the issue just a bit, consider that 56% of this population has taught less than 10 years while only 29% of the Pesce (1990) teachers had taught less than 10 years, and yet the Pesce teachers have moved further away from the basal and further into whole language. While 80% of the current respondents use the basal always/often, only 57% of the Pesce teachers responded similarly. Yet if youth or less teaching experience were the only factor, then this sample should have been the one to show itself further from the basal and more into whole language. Obviously, other variables are at work as well.

Table 6

Use of Materials/Methods by Years Teaching Experience

	Years	N	Never/Seldom	Occas.	Always/Often	NR
Basal/Wkbk.	0- 5	17	29%	6%	59%	6%
	6-10	8	13%		88%	
	11-15	7			100%	
	16-20	7			100%	
	21+	6			100%	
LEA (Class)	0- 5	17	6%	12%	82%	
	6-10	8		63%	38%	
	11-15	7	29%	14%	57%	
	16-20	7	29%	43%	29%	
	21+	6	17%	33%	50%	
Phonics	0- 5	17	18%	29%	47%	6%
	6-10	8	13%	-	75%	13%
	11-15	7	-	14%	86%	
	16-20	7	29%	29%	29%	14%
	21+	6	17%	-	83%	
Big Books	0- 5	17	6%	24%	71%	
	6-10	8	-	38%	63%	
	11-15	7	57%	-	43%	
	16-20	7	43%	14%	43%	
	21+	6	17%	67%	17%	

Table 6 (continued)

Use of Materials/Methods by Years Teaching Experience

	Years	N	Never/Seldom	Occas.	Always/Often	NR
Trade Books	0- 5	17	18%	12%	71%	
	6-10	8	13%	-	50%	38%
	11-15	7	-	43%	43%	14%
	16-20	7	43%	-	57%	
	21+	6	-	50%	33%	17%
Poems/Songs	0- 5	17	12%	6%	82%	
	6-10	8	13%	13%	75%	
	11-15	7	-	43%	57%	
	16-20	7	43%	-	57%	
	21+	6	-	33%	67%	
writ/Process	0- 5	17	-	12%	88%	
	[illegible]	[illegible]	25%	50%	25%	
	11-15	7	57%	-	43%	
	16-20	7	43%	14%	29%	
	21+	6	-	17%	83%	

LEA usage always/often is notably higher among those teachers with the least experience, as is the use of big books and trade books. Those more recently educated, even if at the undergraduate level only, are probably more conversant with a greater variety of methods and more flexible in their ability to mix and match approaches. They are courageous by virtue of youth and eclectic as a result. They are probably the nucleus of the group that will welcome more use of whole language. This brings to mind again the Pesce study. While those teachers responded lower on LEA usage with a 43% always/often tally, they may actually be further along in the transition from basal to whole language/literature. If they are more familiar with the current research, they may make greater use of LEA in kindergarten (a level which was not included in that study) than they do in grade one.

The relationship between phonics usage and years of experience is a little hazy. Phonics would appear to be least essential to the programs of the 0-5 years experience group, were it not for the fact that the 16-20 years group rates it even lower. In the same vein, poems/chants/songs/rhymes are used slightly more often by

the 0-10 years experience group, but there is a fair degree of usage across the board, most likely in different ways as mentioned previously. Here again, however, the 16-20 years group throws us a curve; 43% of them claim to use poems seldom/never, while those groups directly before and after them respond with 0% seldom/never usage.

Writing Methods and Frequency

Writing methods were not addressed in depth by this survey; but, in the attempt to obtain a valid overview of reading methods/materials, it was felt that writing represents an integral part of learning to read as we now understand the process and should be included. Daily writing, be it composing or journal writing, should be a given by those who already affirm the place of process writing in their curricula.

Since the vast majority of teachers with 0-5 years (88%) and 21+ years (83%) experience claim to use writing-as-process always/often, it is shocking to note that only 24% and 33% of those groups respectively write on a daily basis (see Table 7). No more than 29% of any other experience group in this population writes daily

Table 7

Writing Frequency

	Weekly	3-4x/week	Daily	NR
Entire survey sample	42%	36%	22%	
LEA users only	15%	52%	33%	
Non-LEA users only	67%	22%	6%	6%

Writing Frequency by Years Teaching Experience

	Weekly	3-4x/week	Daily	NR
0 - 5	18%	59%	24%	
6 - 10	63%	13%	25%	
11 - 15	43%	29%	29%	
16 - 20	43%	14%	29%	14%
21+	-	67%	33%	

even though 60% overall use process writing always/often. Of all respondents in the survey, only 22% have their students write on a daily basis.

Writing frequency is substantially higher among LEA users than any other subgroup of this study. Table 7 shows that 33% of LEA teachers have their children write daily, and the contrast is evident in that only 6% on non-LEA teachers do so. Broadening this data a bit here for perspective, the results show that 85% of LEA users write at least 3 times per week while only 28% of non-LEA users do. The LEA group applies the principles of the reading-writing connection more regularly in actual practice. They may be greater respecters of children's own facility with language having had more experience with student-developed composition.

Intradistrict Consistency

Between 62% and 100% of the respondents from Franklin Lakes, Midland Park, Paramus and Wyckoff use LEA always/often, while none of the responding teachers from Hohokus or Waldwick do. Interestingly, all responses from Hohokus and Waldwick indicate teacher selection of basal

materials whereas the other districts indicate either administrative or collaborative decision-making.

There is a substantial degree of intradistrict and intraschool unity with just a few exceptions. LEA is a foundational part of the district beginning reading instruction in Wyckoff. Wyckoff's school #4 on the survey, however, stands out from the other district schools because 75% of its respondents use LEA seldom/never. This makes more sense when one checks further into the situation; these teachers place the greatest value on big books and trade books and call themselves "literature-oriented." It so happens that they are piloting a whole-language program and marching to a different drummer this year than the other schools.

Franklin Lakes' schools #1 and #3 are in 100% agreement on LEA always/often usage while school #2 reflects completely diverse usage of LEA and very definite agreement on the basal as most essential to its reading program. One teacher volunteered on her survey return that she will be piloting a literature-oriented whole language program next year. The Franklin Lakes' respondents include only 22% with 0-5 years experience and none with

known graduate degrees; apparently it is not recent undergraduate or graduate course work that is alerting this system to current trends in reading, but something or someone is. One might speculate that the administration keeps itself abreast of current research.

Midland Park is in complete agreement on always/often usage of LEA methods and Hohokus is in complete agreement on seldom/never usage. Waldwick is a split decision, school by school, between seldom/never and occasionally. Wyckoff is also split, three to one for LEA. Paramus, with its four schools, joins Midland Park as the only other system to "never say never."

Profile of LEA User

Of the 45 respondents to the survey, 27 use LEA always/often and 12 do so occasionally. Only 6 respondents seldom/never use LEA. The informational profile here is based on the responses of the 27 teachers (60% of those surveyed) who use class-dictated LEA always/often.

The majority of LEA users have BA degrees(50%) and

less than 5 years teaching experience (52%). They consider their instructional orientation to be "basal-plus-literature" (78%) or "primarily literature" (22%) rather than "basal" (0%). They may have been introduced to LEA in their more recent teacher preparation programs and/or they may have entered a district which already uses LEA in its curriculum. There is a pattern of majority usage in four of the surveyed districts and zero usage in the other two.

LEA methods are more apt to be used by those who integrate all the language arts. Of the LEA group, 89% incorporate direct instruction in phonics and 93% incorporate direct instruction in comprehension skills into their LEA activities. Writing process is used always/often by 67% of these teachers and only 15% of them write less than 3-4 times per week in contrast to 67% of non-LEA users. These teachers are more likely to use whole-language materials/methods as well - big books, trade books - but not to a degree significantly different from non-LEA users. There is a totality of language awareness evidenced by this group.

The most notable difference between the entire

response group and the subgroups of LEA users and non-users is in writing frequency. LEA users put the reading-writing connection into practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to determine the position of the language experience approach to reading instruction among the various methods and materials available today, a survey was developed and mailed to all 71 kindergarten and first-grade teachers in six districts of northwest Bergen County, New Jersey. The 63% response rate does provide some interesting feedback and allow for some loose generalizations, but it is important to keep in mind that the teachers who did respond may not be all that representative of the entire population. The very fact that they were willing to take the time to participate in a survey identifies them as teachers of unusual concern and curiosity.

Conclusions

The 45 survey responses indicate that:

1. The basal reader is still the primary instructional tool of the respondents.

2. Sixty percent of the respondents use

class-dictated LEA methods always or often in their programs. They do use big books and poems/chants/songs/rhymes more often than the total group, but they still use basals and phonics to the same extent as the total survey sample; they may actually use trade books less. Only three of the LEA teachers had their most recent course/workshop before 1989. LEA teachers differ from the overall group most significantly in the place of writing in their programs. They are somewhat more likely to use process writing and much more likely to write more frequently. They are professional teachers trying to function on shifting sands. They haven't become whole language teachers yet, but, know it or not, they are on that track. A number of respondents volunteered that they would soon be piloting whole language or literature programs in their schools. Other respondents said that, given the right to choose, they would prefer to be literature based.

3. There are more significant comparisons within the sample group by virtue of years of experience. Those teachers with 0-5 years experience place the least emphasis on the basal reader; the most emphasis on LEA, big books, trade books, and poems; and are more apt to use writing-as-process. They write 3 or more times per week

more than any other group except the 21+ years group.

4. Writing-as-process is emphasized most by those with both the least experience and the most experience - in other words, both extremes.

5. Writing frequency is greater among the less experienced teachers on the whole; daily writing is significantly greater among the LEA teachers than among the non-LEA teachers.

6. For the most part, teachers within any given district use similar programs.

7. Teachers in the Pesce Northern Valley District survey have moved more toward whole language across the board than this group. This is probably because they have more frequent interaction with each other as teachers and as administrators in a shared district.

Recommendations

As a result of this research the following are recommendations:

Teachers should subscribe to professional publications in order to keep current on the latest research on methods/materials. They should also interconnect with other primary reading instructors to share practical experience; the sharing should go beyond district lines.

Administrators should assume responsibility for providing staff development for their. They, too, should subscribe to professional journals and network with other systems to keep on the cutting edge of reading research. They have the authority to arrange "exchange programs" to provide modeling for their teachers by other teachers. Handouts are good but hands on (or eyes and ears on) is better. It is bad business that those teachers who are most current are those with least experience. Unfortunately, they may not carry sufficient weight among their peers to be considered as valuable resources.

School systems should require regular, fully-reimbursed graduate courses for their staff leaders.

Principals and supervisors need to be able to recognize what is "best" in their fields. This information is too important for its dissemination to be left to chance. What is not known will never be used.

Further research is suggested along the following lines:

Track backwards the instructional history of those successful readers at intermediate or upper elementary levels. One might select a reading assessment instrument, determine the proficiency of select groups of third-graders or sixth graders, for example, and both survey and observe their respective kindergarten and first-grade teachers. Determine the methods/materials favored by those teachers in the attempt to search for what works. Focus on locating the strengths. It is true that very good teachers will usually achieve very good results, but, in their satchels of methods and materials, there is probably something replicable; they are doing something right and others can learn from them.

Continue to document data on the use of LEA in prereading programs. The tendency to see it as a tool for reading instruction may have all but obscured its significance as a prereading tool. It needn't be an

"either/or" choice.

Pursue studying the place of LEA in the reading-writing connection. Those who use LEA are more likely to value writing as a daily language activity.

Experiment with the use of small-group or individual LEA for "at-risk" early readers as a form of intervention. These children comprise a special population of sorts and the literature is woven throughout with comments on the effectiveness of LEA with other special populations (e.g. ESL students, the linguistically different, lower socioeconomic students, remedial students and adult illiterates) (Hall, 1978).

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March, 1991

Dear Teacher:

I will be graduating in May from William Paterson College with an M.A. in Reading. The enclosed anonymous survey is part of a research project I am constructing to fulfill the requirements of the program. I would very much appreciate your taking a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete the survey.

Enclosed please find a stamped and addressed return envelope for your convenience. Thank you very much for your consideration and prompt response.

Sincerely,

Carol Garofalo
140 Midwood Road
Glen Rock, NJ 07452

652-2311

READING SURVEY

1. School District (check one)

Franklin Lakes___ Oakland___ Waldwick___
Hohokus___ Paramus___ Wyckoff___
Midland Park___

2. How many years have you been teaching? (check one)

0-5___
6-10___
11-15___
16-20___
21+___

3. Educational level (check one)

BA___
BA+15___
BA+30___
MA___
MA+___

4. When was the last time you took a course/workshop in Reading? (specify year only)_____

5. Reading Materials

To what extent do you use the following? (circle number) Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always						Who selects the program/ materials? (check column) Teacher	Administration or Other
A. Basal Reader Program (specify publisher)_____							
Basal & Workbook	1	2	3	4	5	_____	_____
Basal Only	1	2	3	4	5	_____	_____
Workbook Only	1	2	3	4	5	_____	_____
B. Language Experience Approach (LEA)						_____	_____
Class-dictated stories	1	2	3	4	5		
Small-group dictations	1	2	3	4	5		
Individual dictations	1	2	3	4	5		

Do you take down the child's language verbatim or do you edit as you go?_____

Do you integrate direct instruction into your LEA activities?

Phonics	1	2	3	4	5
Word-attack skills	1	2	3	4	5
Comprehension skills	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5

C. Big Books 1 2 3 4 5
(specify publisher)_____ _____

D. Trade Books 1 2 3 4 5
(How are they used?)_____
_____
_____

Never Always
1 2 3 4 5

E. Code Emphasis Approach

Phonics Program 1 2 3 4 5
(specify)_____

Linguistics/
Spelling Patterns 1 2 3 4 5

6. Which of the above methods/materials do you personally believe is most essential to your Reading program: A,B,C,D or E?
(circle letter,and comment if desired)_____
_____

7. To what extent do you use the following for Reading?

Poems, Chants, Songs, Rhymes 1 2 3 4 5

Magazines 1 2 3 4 5
(specify)_____

Newspapers 1 2 3 4 5
(specify)_____

Computers 1 2 3 4 5
(specify software)_____

Other_____

8. Do you consider yourself primarily basal-oriented, basal-plus-literature, or primarily literature-oriented in your reading instruction?__
_____
_____

9. How do you group children for instruction? (check one)

Ability_____
Interest_____
Individualized (children choose own groups)_____
Other (specify)_____

10. Writing - Composition

A. Do you teach writing as a process in a workshop atmosphere? (prewriting, drafting, editing, revising) 1 2 3 4 5

B. Do you consider LEA as part of your writing program (i.e.modeling)?
_____

C. How often do your children write (compose)? (check one)

Daily_____
3-4 times per week_____
Weekly_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return in enclosed envelope to:

Carol Garofalo
140 Midwood Road
Glen Rock, NJ 07452